ASIFA EAST

The International Animated Film Society

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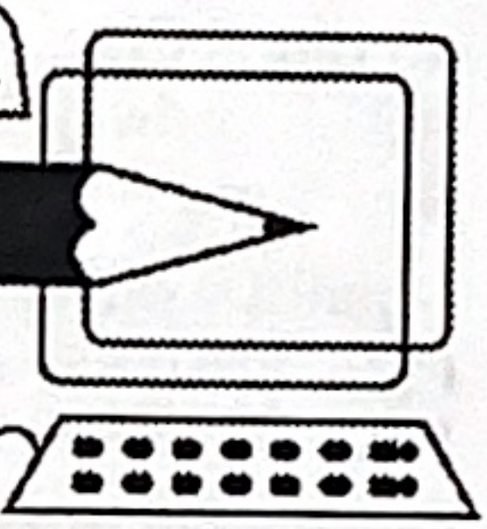
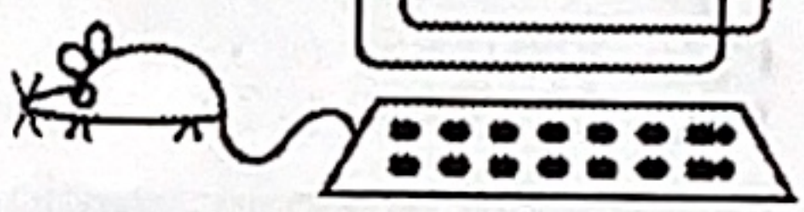


February 2002 Issue

ASIFA EAST/NYU present



An Evening with Richard Williams

FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2002, 7 pm

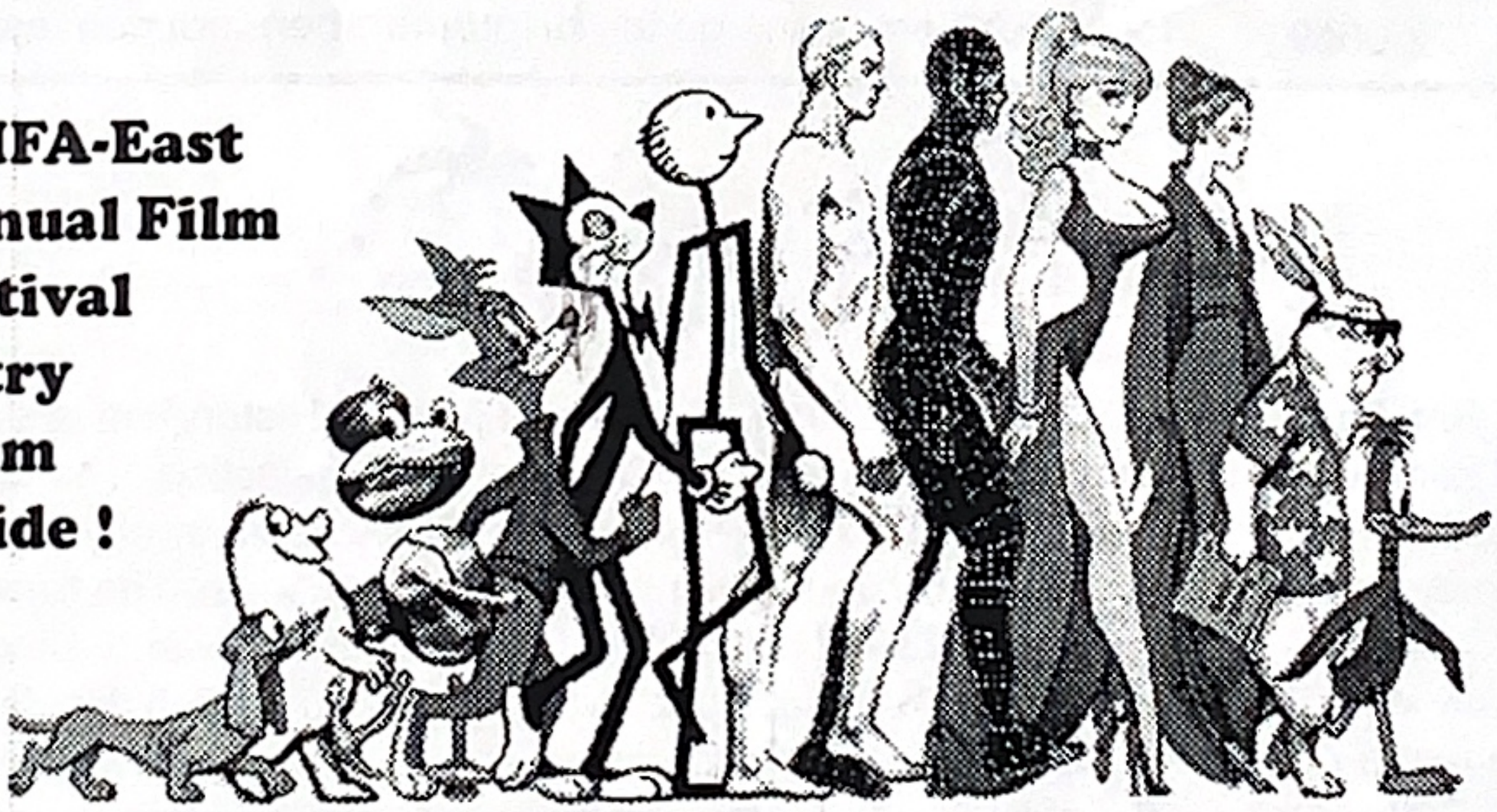
NYU Cantor Film Center

36 E. 8th Street

* Due to limited space, this event is open to ASIFA-East members and NYU students only.

JOIN US FOR A MINI-MASTER CLASS AND BOOK SIGNING. COPIES OF *THE ANIMATOR'S SURVIVAL KIT* WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE AT THE EVENT.

ASIFA-East Annual Film Festival Entry Form Inside !



THE ANIMATOR'S SURVIVAL KIT™

ASIFA East

The International Animated Film Society Northeast /New York Chapter

A Program of the New York Foundation For The Arts

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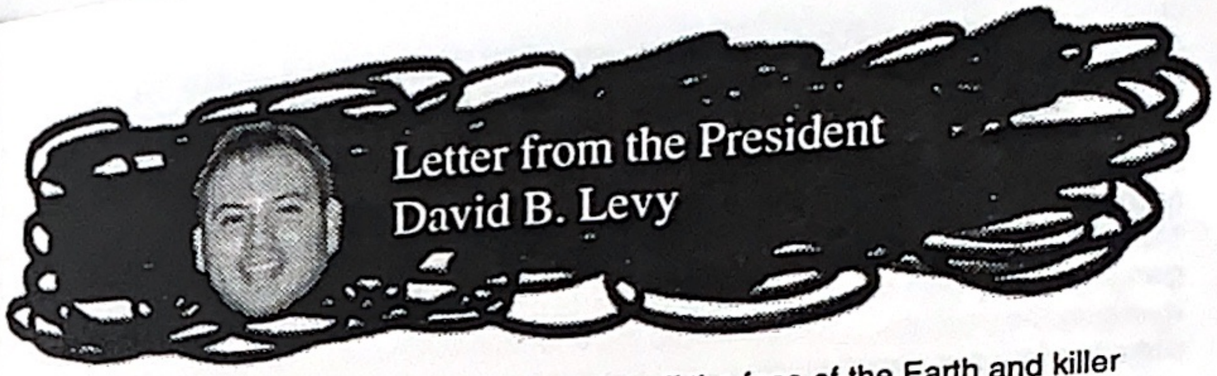
for ASIFA-East online go to : **http://members.aol.com/asifaeast**

On Sat. March 30th at 1 pm, Kafumann, Museum of Natural History, I'm talking about and showing **"Animated Jewels: A Pearl of a Program"** a selection of cartoons (16mm prints, no video) made in NY and Hollywood that show off jewelry. The program is tied in with a show on pearls being held by the museum. The films made in NYC include Winsor McCay's "Little Nemo," "Betty Boop in Blunderland" Beyy Boop in "Snow White" Cubby Bear in "Opening Night" (Van Beuren) and The Little King in a risque pre-code romp, "Sultan Pepper." Also in the program from Hollywood is Bugs and Daffy in a cave full of jewels and a topless mermaid from the pre-code era. Films are being shown without my being present on Sunday, March 17 at 1 pm.

On. Sunday, March 31, 1 pm Kafumann Theater, **"Hey Batter Batter! Animated Home Runs"** in connection with a show of baseball history, a program of films about baseball. Cartoons from Van Beuren, Fleischer, Warner Bros. UPA plus live action vintage TV commercials with baseball stars and a rare silent comedy with Micky McGuire (Mickey Rooney).

--- karlcohen@earthlink.net



Layoffs, productions wrapping, studios dropping off the face of the Earth and killer pretzels are just some of the reasons to be less than inspired these days. With that in mind, here are some things you can get excited about (in no particular order):

Toon Heads on Cartoon Network

Think of *Toon Heads* as the perfect compliment to CN's *Tex Avery* and *Bob Clampett shows.* Like those programs, *Toon Heads* takes the emphasis off the cartoon stars and puts it on it's more obscure directors. Here's the best part: episodes are arranged according to different themes. The vintage Hollywood cartoons (those fortunate or unfortunate to end up in the Turner library) are collected into such common subjects as *Moon Toons*, *The Baby Boom*, *The House of Tomorrow*, *The Early Works of Friz Freling* etc.... In the past, if you wanted to see cartoons arranged this way, you had to wait for special and rare retrospective screenings organized by such historians as Jerry Beck, John Canemaker or Bill Lorenzo for organizations like Asifa-east or other cultural institutions. Jerry Beck is among those who provide nuggets of historical information for use in *Toon Heads*, which helps go a long way to make this show be tailored for more serious cartoon aficionados. A happy aspect of *Toon Heads* is that you'll get to see rare cartoons, seldom seen in regular TV rotation. So sit back...make some pop-corn and enjoy your own mini-festival in your living room. *Toon Heads*...its what's for dinner.

Fritz The Cat On DVD!

Much like today, The 1970s and pre-*Roger Rabbit* 1980s are not known as a high point for employment or opportunity in animation. In the midst of that period rose Ralph Bakshi, fresh off his many-year climb up the ranks of Terrytoons, emerging as the most fiercely independent animated filmmaker of his generation. Today its common to hear the theory that Bakshi "almost succeeded" or that he "tried hard but ultimately failed" to accomplish his goals of pushing animated entertainment to an adult audience. Since *Fritz the Cat* (1972), Bakshi directed and produced ten more theatrical animated films (all released through major studio distribution). Its important to note that for much of that time, Ralph's was the sole alternative available to the traditional Disney product. Some might be brave enough to consider this a mark of success.

Fritz sparkles on DVD. I can only imagine how different and bold this film must have been at the time of its release. *Fritz* (adapted from underground comic artist R. Crumb's creation) celebrates the 60s culture of hippies, free love (or buy one get one free-love) and mind-altering substances, without looking at them through rose colored glasses. As NYU students, Fritz and his animal pals pretend to be guitar-slinging philosophy-spouting politically conscious young men in NY's Washington Square Park just to score with girls. Creatively, some of the most interesting moments in *Fritz* occur during transitional moments, such as when the lush background art yields to all black canvases which beautifully contrast with the cel painted characters. There is a stunning animated moment when a crow is featured bopping (against a black background) to a Bo Diddly beat as the next scene slowly advances towards the camera, swallowing it up. Fritz's

cross country drive with girlfriend Francie in a VW Bug reminds me of Woody Allen/Diane Keaton banter from movies like *Annie Hall* (1977).

Fritz is partly a road picture. After a start in Downtown Manhattan, we next stop at a bar in Harlem, where Fritz does his best to insert himself into the revolution..and perhaps even instigate it. A great scene in the bar has Fritz trying to prove his street creds to a pool-playing spat-wearing crow (A distant, urban relative of the crows from *Dumbo*?). As the crow tries his best to ignore Fritz and concentrate on his lousy pool game, there is nice sophisticated layering of their dialogue with shots of the pool balls avoiding the pockets. Bakshi keeps the characters' voices rough (often recorded outside of proper sound studios) and the interplay between multiple characters natural, predating the impromptu vocalizations of *Dr. Katz* by decades. Best of all, this is pre-rotoscope Ralph Bakshi filmmaking. The terrific animation of Jim Tyer, Milton Gray and many others is not to be missed.

Disney Releases Silly Symphonies and Mickey Mouse In Color Collections on DVD

On the new double disc DVD set of selected *Silly Symphonies* from 1929-1938, you can literally watch the principals of animation evolve during the golden age of the Hollywood cartoon. Shorts like, *Three Little Pigs* (1933), *The Grasshopper And The Ants* (1934), *The Flying Mouse* (1935), *The Country Cousin* (1936) are early influential gems of character animation. Together with the more technically minded shorts like, *The Old Mill* (1937), *Wynken, Blynken And Nod* (1938), these films established the validity of the short animated film as viable entertainment in a medium that had almost worn out its welcome as a silent era novelty. More important still is the fact that these films tested ground and grew the Disney crew's confidence to face the bigger challenges of the feature films to come.

My only criticism with this set is its lack of chronological order. Films are arranged by themes such as nature, accent on music, fables, etc. There are even sections on each disc where Leonard Malitin gives his "picks of the litter". For one of his favorites, *The Three Little Pigs*, Maltin goes through great pains to put a clip from the original short, in which the wolf dresses up as stereotypical Jewish peddler to gain entry to the pigs cottage, into its proper historical perspective. Oddly, the clip is then missing from the actual cartoon as seen on this DVD set. Copy written on the outside of this collection calls it uncensored. Not quite.

The Mickey Mouse color shorts collection wisely covers only the years between 1935-1938. Anything after that date would only reveal that Mickey's days as a viable character were numbered. Even with this in mind, the collection is mile stone-heavy. The ultra-rare *Parade of Award Nominees* (1932), is the first glimpse of Mickey in color (note the green short pants). *The Band Concert* (1935), *Pluto's Judgement Day* (1935) and *Thru The Mirror* (1936) are well paced and imaginative fare. *Moving Day* (1936) cements the Mickey-Goofy-Donald formula, which perhaps reached its greatest heights (pun intended!) in Clock Cleaners (1937).

Both collections represent the high point of the Disney short and its invaluable contribution to the animated art form. By the 1950s, Disney produced short subjects infrequently. An interview of the time had Disney singling out the heavy costs of producing quality short subjects as a deterrent to regular production. He went on to add that he still made a few shorts now and then to prevent theatres from showing one of his pictures (usually live action features by this time) with some awful short (from the competition).

In reality, the ground breaking lessons learned from the Disney shorts of the 1930s found their way into rival studios. Disney acknowledges this himself on the commentary track on the new DVD release of *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs* as he talks about how the artists he trained make up the bulk of the personnel of each and every animation studio in Hollywood. Warner Bros. directors like Frank Tashlin, Bob Clampett and Chuck Jones were ready to use Disney animation expertise in an entirely new way. Perhaps no one corrupted Disney better than WB/MGM director Tex Avery. At MGM, Bill Hannah & Joe Barbera and Tex Avery used Disney timing and believability to make painful gags come to life. Even studios like Terry Toons and Walter Lantz rose in the quality of their output.

By the 1940s, Disney shorts directors like Jack Hannah tried to play catch up to the new brash and comedic shorts being turned out by their competition by reshaping Goofy into "how-to" and "sports" formats. In the 1950s, Disney once again struggled to keep up, this time with the changing graphics and storytelling that had evolved at UPA. It just goes to show that you can't keep good ideas down...nor (unfortunately for Walt himself) can you control how they will be utilized.

ANNOUNCEMENT

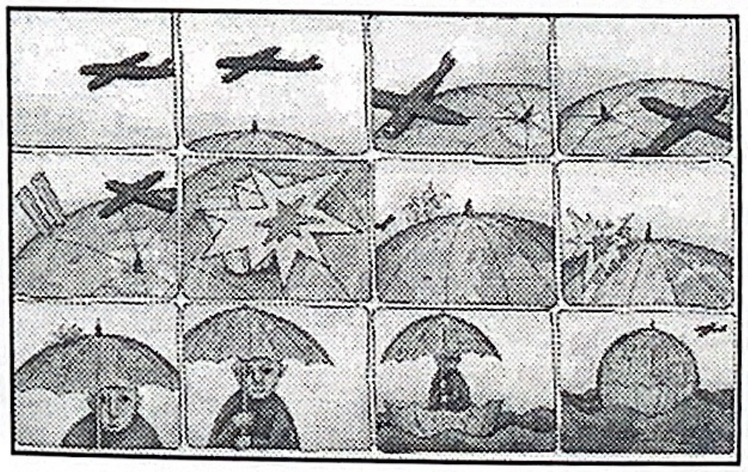
STATEMENT

Due date for films made for "Statement" has been extended to March 1, 2002. Video tapes (vhs and 3/4 only, please) should be delivered to David Levy, C/O Blue's Clues 1633 Broadway 4th floor, NY, NY 10019. Questions? Call David Levy at 212-654-6859.

What is "Statement"?
In response to the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, we at ASIFA-East propose that animators contribute a short (30 seconds to one minute) film presenting their own statement or thoughts on the recent events. [As the NY chapter, in a sense, it is our responsibility to reflect on film our feelings about what has happened.]

The main purpose of "Statement" is to express reaction to the terrorist attack and possibly to offer hope and inspiration to all people and especially to those who have suffered from the results.

*A special screening of films made for "Statement" is planned for sometime in April 2002. Stay tuned for more details.



artwork by Signe Baumane

Faith Hubley by Michael Sporn

"Independent animator" is the term used loosely to describe those who make films on their own with no principal backing from any one source. Ownership of their own work obviously has a lot to do with it. Making the film they want to make (without interference from one of the backers) has more.

In the Sixties and early Seventies, there were a lot of Independent animators producing films made with a social conscience and statements galore. As baby boomers got older and started worrying about the responsibilities life had thrown on them, they became less ambitious with animation. They also stopped making their own films. The rising number of animation/film students took over this role for a while, but now it seems that most "personal" films made today try only to outdo the Cartoon Network, posing as self-financed pilots. There aren't many people who continue to make films because they have something to say.

Faith Hubley was the only person to bridge the ages. She made films with meaning in the Fifties, Sixties, Seventies, Eighties, Nineties, and right into the new millennium. She was the godmother of Independent animation, and she died on December 7, 2001, a week before the print of her most recent film was released from the lab.

Back in the forties, after the big Disney strike, a group of artists started seeing the graphic potential of animation. They formed what became UPA and made films that looked like Steinberg and Picasso and Bemelmans. John Hubley was one of the leaders in this group, and it didn't take him long to start exploiting subtext in developing his stories. Films such as ROOTY TOOT TOOT evolved and stirred things up.

During this period, Faith Elliot and John Hubley became a couple and eventually married. By the early Fifties they had formed their own studio, Storyboard, Inc. They moved to New York from L.A. and initially made commercials. I didn't take long for them to make their first theatrical short. ADVENTURES OF AN *. It was made for $8000 in 1957 with a Guggenheim grant and utilized the techniques and style of abstract expressionism to tell a non-verbal story about creative development. Needless to say, it was different from any other animated film done prior to it. TENDER GAME followed in 1958 using similar methods. Both films used jazz to underscore the emotions on screen, and both films caused a stir in the animation community. (TENDER GAME played theatrically at the Plaza cinema in New York with THE MIRACLE, the Italian neo-realist film that was condemned and picketed by the Legion of Decency.)

In1959, John and Faith recorded their two sons, Mark and Ray, at play. The several hours of recorded material were cut down to ten minutes, and MOONBIRD had its soundtrack. Visually, it was a stunning masterpiece. Double and triple-exposed animation drawings (painted black outside the lines of the characters) danced ephemerally across glorious oil paintings by John. The film won the Oscar and the style was set.

Every year, Faith and John pledged to produce an animated short come hell or high water. (This was a vow Faith kept till the end of her life.) Detailed storyboards were done (no words or dialogue were written below the boards I saw). They used jazz greats such as Dizzy Gillespie, Benny Carter, Billy Taylor and Quincy Jones to write the music for their films – always in advance of the animation. The voices used were jazz of another sort – actors improvised, often with non-actors, to create the tracks. Dizzy Gillespie acting with Maureen Stapleton or Dudley Moore. Children were always children – never adults cartooning voices for children. And most importantly, the films were about something.

Great animators such as Bobe Cannon, Bill Littlejohn, Tissa David, Barrie Nelson, Ed Smith and Emery Hawkins did the animation in most of these films.

In 1976, Faith made a film on her own; working within the same studio two films were in process – one directed by John, one directed by Faith. WOW (Women of the World) was a radical departure from the films she'd made with John. More surrealist in nature, it took images from famous paintings mixed with those from primitive art. The subtext became more important than the text, and stylistically a new artist was born.

After John died, Faith continued her film-a-year pledge. Her films were very different than the collaborations she'd done with John. Rarely did they use spoken words, yet often text appeared on screen. The music wasn't so much jazz as it was minimalist and percussive. Classical composer, Don Christensen scored many of the films in a percussive, original style. Yo Lo Tengo (a musical group which includes Georgia Hubley), William Russo and Elizabeth Swados scored others. Frequently, Faith, herself, played cello pieces for the films. The animation for these films was frequently done predominantly by Emily Hubley and Bill Littlejohn. In the last few films, Faith also animated.

It's hard for me to accept, after all these years, that Faith is gone. Her work was the Mount Olympus of animation for me. There is no one, and by that I mean no one, who does anything similar. There are only only a few in New York who even make personal films. There are none who make non-linear films; there are few who bring such poetry to the art of animation. Faith had nothing commercial about her work, yet somehow she figured out how to raise the funds to make the films. I couldn't have more respect for what she did, or, personally, how she affected me. Animation will miss her, the New York community will miss her, and I will miss her.

Animators Unite!

by Adrien Zap

Have you heard about Animators Unite, Inc.? If not...head over to www.animatorsunite.com and be sure to check it out! It's a brand new, East coast-based animation on-line community and you don't want to miss out!

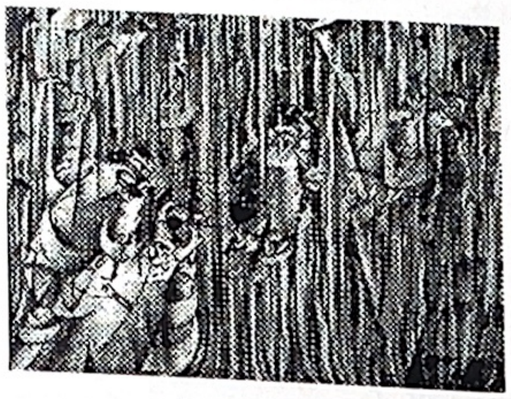
Animators Unite, Inc. offers a bunch of information through discussion boards, local and national news postings, announcements of upcoming events in the animation world, local contests, portals to other great animation web sites, as well as a film forum for members' work.

The newest film to enter the Animators Unite, Inc. gallery is SVA alumnus Chris McDonnell's Sketch Modern (2001). This dramatic animation is a portrayal of a young artist sketching from streets the city - only to find her sketches later come to life and enter her world. Be sure to check the film section often as new films are added every month! Do you have a finished film you want the animation world to see? What better place to put it than in the Animators Unite, Inc. film gallery! Drop a line to films@animatorsunite.com to get in touch with Celia about making your film a part of the web site. And while you're visiting the web site, be sure to register for FREE and become a member of Animators Unite, Inc. Membership includes the free Animators Unite, Inc. cyber newsletter and access to the discussion boards.

Animators Unite, Inc. is a non-profit incorporation under the state of New York since August of 2001, and has been generously sponsored by a grant from the Visual Arts Foundation.

VIEW POINT AIEM

THOSE WHO STAY
by Michael Sporn



The Futurist painter, Umberto Boccioni created a triptych which has affected me enormously. His "States of Mind" consists of three paintings; they are: THE FAREWELLS, THOSE WHO GO, and THOSE WHO STAY (pictured above). The group of paintings can be viewed on a number of different levels. Since he was a Futurist, he was dedicated to pushing all art and us into the dynamic future. Those who go were the exciting ones; those who stay, the ones left behind, were out of it.

Of course, like all good art it can be interpreted in many ways. World War I was in the forefront of Boccioni's mind at the time he painted it. Weren't the farewells those going off to war; the dynamism of those hearty, would-be soldiers leaving behind their elders?

As a young art student with only animation on the brain, I didn't really worry about World War I, except that I was in love with the Futurist painters, many of whom went into the war to die. I saw animation as the future of art and put all my energy into it. In a sense, I felt I was already one who was going. However, once I entered animation I saw something different. I knew animation history and was too respectful of the Masters who had done incredible work in the late Thirties early Forties - those Disney/Warner guys. They had a lot to teach me about how animation was done. They invented the rules and I needed to learn them to be successful. I was enchanted with Dick Williams and his overzealous respect for the animators of the past who could teach so much.

But then, I was already working with and for John & Faith Hubley. They came from the past and were inventing a future for animation. At UPA, John moved past the 19th Century and introduced animation to Steinberg, Dufy and Matisse. I think that ROOTY TOOT TOOT was probably the most important animated film – design wise – to follow THE OLD MILL. Things coalesced and changed with both films. Then he and Faith embraced the New York School and produced abstract expressionism in animation. Could they be more forward thinking! Where could animation go from there!

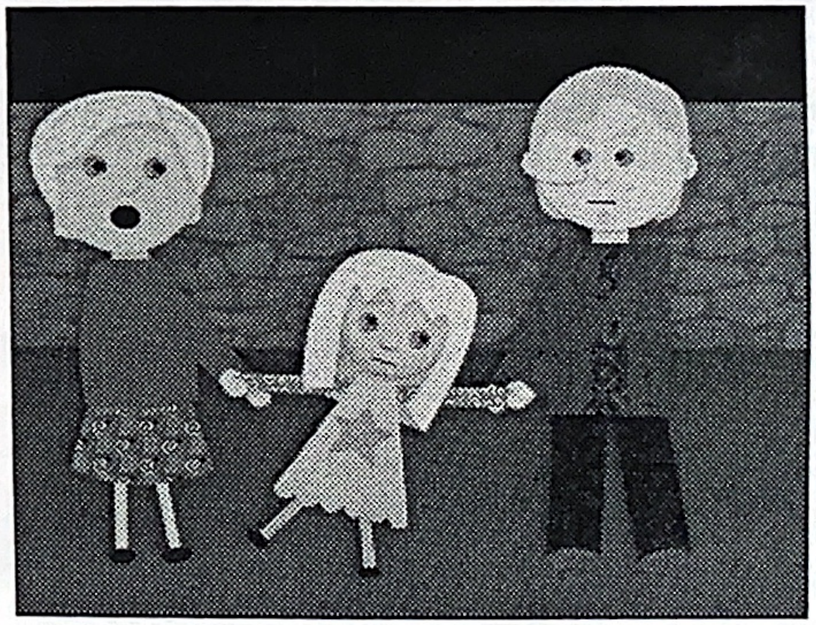
Recently, there was a memorial for Faith Hubley at the Museum of Modern Art. At the party afterward, on the side, George Griffin, John Canemaker and Bill Plympton were in conversation about the new animation feature Oscar category. I was pulled into the conversation; Jason McDonald, with me at the time, joined me. In the quick short introduction (I wanted to be sure they all knew Jason - though I think they did), I gave them Jason's name but found myself introducing us as the "old timers".

In that split second, I came to realize that too many of the old "Masters" have died. Here we were at Faith Hubley's memorial service, and the four of us were among the living – the future and the past. (Two of us saw MONSTERS, INC. as the best feature; two of us saw WAKING LIFE as best. Talk about the future and the past!)

Faith and John and others (just recently Ray Patterson, David Swift and Ernie Pintoff) have died. A younger set of animation filmmakers have risen to take the mantel. I'm getting older, but still have my hope for animation set firmly in the future. I'm one of those who stay, but like a furious animal I keep gnashing away at what I hope is the future.

Dream upon a Starr by O.Wexler

Did you ever dream that one of your parents was trying to keep you from seeing the other? Was it ripping you apart? Did you ever fantasize about electrocuting someone, or kicking your baby brother across a field, like a football? Well neither have I, but these are the dreams of Starr Manning, a child character on the ABC soap opera, "One Life to Live," as animated by Holly Klein. Klein, whose film "Duncan" took First Prize in the Independent Film category at the 2001 ASIFA Awards, has animated six sequences for the soap opera to date, and is currently working on the seventh. Executive Producer Gary Tomlin found Klein through NYU's John Canemaker, under whom she studied. She sent Tomlin "Duncan", and was asked to do the sequences. Klein has previously animated for Nickelodeon's Little Bill and Blue's Clues, where she also a Director of Animation, as well for Oxygen Television and Disney International. Her work for "One Life to Live" is the first time she has been able to design, direct, and animate all in her own unique style, from a script of dialogue given to her by the show. "Starr is a conniving, demonic character," says Klein, "and she lends herself really easily to animation. It's great that they chose to use animation in this way on the show". The sequences are as dramatic as the soap opera itself. Starr was ripped in half in one of them, she electrocuted a villain of the show in another, and in her most exciting dream to date she will be a guest on the morning talk show, "Live with Regis and Kelly". For this dream, Regis and Kelly will be voiced by the actual Regis Philbin and Kelly Ripa and designed, like Starr, as cutout characters, by Klein. "It was hard enough designing characters to look like the stars of "One Life to Live," says Klein, "but harder still to design the set of the talk show, and recognizable on-air personalities." It is unknown as to how long "One Life to Live" will use animation on their show, but Klein hopes it is a very long time. "I love this job," she says, "It gives me great freedom, and though it's hard work, it's really satisfying to do everything: storyboarding, designing, directing, and animating".



"One Life to Live" airs every day on ABC from 2-3pm. Starr's next animated fantasies will air on Feb .5th, Feb, 13th, and Feb. 19th.

2002 ASIFA-East Animated Festival Entry Form

CONTACT NAME

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER

TITLE OF ENTRY

LENGTH

IMPORTANT: If entry is over 15 minutes, you must provide a 5-10 minute excerpt for judging and screening purposes *in addition* to the full piece. While every attempt will be made to screen entries in full, due to timing considerations, ASIFA-East reserves the right to screen excerpts.

FORMAT

☐ VHS 1/2" cassette ☐ 3/4" U-matic videocassette

OTHER FORMATS WILL **NOT** BE ACCEPTED.

CREDITS

PRODUCTION COMPANY / AFFILIATED SCHOOL

DIRECTOR(S)

ANIMATOR(S)

WRITTEN BY

DESIGNER

FEES

STUDENT	COMMERCIALS & PROMOS	INDEPENDENT FILMS
☐ $ 5.00	☐ $ 20.00 ASIFA member	☐ $ 25.00 ASIFA mem
	☐ $ 30.00 Non member	☐ $ 35.00 Non membe

SPONSORED FILMS OVER 2 MIN.

☐ $ 25.00 ASIFA member

☐ $ 35.00 Non member

Payable by non-refundable check only, made out to ASIFA-East. Check must accompany entry.

☐ I hereby give ASIFA-East permission to include my film in a reel or tape to be circulated for ASIFA-East screenings in the year following the festival.

Having read the above form and entry instructions and filled it out in full, I hereby subm my film to the ASIFA-East annual animated film festival.

Entrant's Signature

Entrant's Printed Name

Make sure your package includes this completed **entry form**, a **check** made out to ASIFA-East for entry fees, **clearly labeled entry**, and *if over 15 minutes long*, a clearly labeled excerpt on a **separate tape**.

USED FOR AWARD CERTIFICATES.
PLEASE FILL OUT CLEARLY AND NEATLY.

For official ASIFA use only

E NOTE: This form will be used for award and information. Please read this form very ully, and fill it out *fully* before submitting your

H E S M A L L P R I N T

GIBILITY: Film must be produced after **July 1, 2000**, and must be received no later than Monday , 2002 accompanied by completed entry form. Obtain additonal information by calling **Linda** y at **404-885-0821**. Xeroxes of blank forms are acceptable.

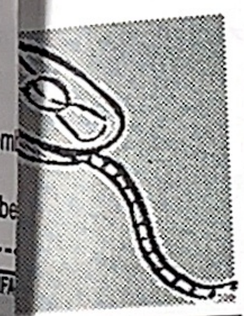
ARD CATEGORIES: 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes for overall excellence will be given within each of the entry tions: *Student Films, Commercial & Promos, Independent Films,* and *Sponsored Films Over 2 Minutes.* Films will also be eligible for two honorable mention awards. Commercials, Promos, Independent Films, and ed Films over 2 minutes will be eligible for Best In Show designation. In addition, craft awards may be given n classifications. **The decision in all categories will be final.** All awards will be made by judges selected by rds Committee, and will be based on results of judging by the membership of ASIFA-East.

ISCLAIMER: ASIFA-East will not be responsible for prints lost in the mail, or for damage incurred in on, although ASIFA-East will agree to take all reasonable care when screening prints. ASIFA-East will esponsible for infringements of rights of prints accepted for screening by the jury.

AILING INSTRUCTIONS: All entries should be clearly labeled with film title and production company. sponsible for damage to prints in transit. All entries will be returned via parcel post, unless other ements are made with ASIFA-East. **Mail or Deliver** to: ASIFA-EAST AWARDS COMMITTEE, DAVE LEVY/BLUE'S CLUES, 1633 BROADWAY, 4TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 9.

heightened security, please make sure packages are clearly labeled, as they will be inspected prior to ry.

QUESTIONS?: Please contact: **Linda Simensky at 404-885-0821, Nancy Keegan at**



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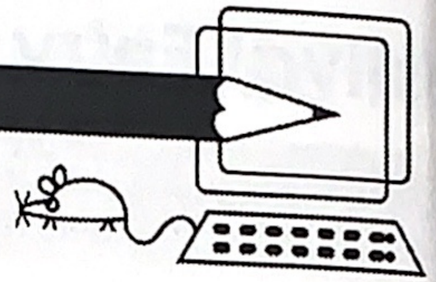
Book Review by Richard Gorey, Jr.



Animation: The Whole Story by Howard Beckerman

When I heard that Howard Beckerman was writing a book, I was thrilled. Having read the book, I had the chance to be thrilled all over again, because it's the book I was secretly hoping he'd write. It's the book I wish I'd had, when I was fifteen and had just gotten my Super-8 camera.

I'd been a student of Howard's twenty years ago, when I attended SVA. Howard was a great teacher, and an insightful and intelligent speaker. He'd been in the business for thirty years already, by the time I knew him, and he'd seen it all. At that time, the industry hadn't made its remarkable comeback, and animation wasn't quite the hot ticket item it is today. You would never have known this, from the way Howard talked about animation, and how he taught it.

This honest respect for his chosen profession is at the heart of his new book, Animation, the Whole Story. And I do mean "The Whole Story." Almost overwhelming in its scope, covering the history, technique, marketing, salesmanship, and post-production of animated films, the book says many things, but never loses sight of its simple message: tell a good story.

Those who know Howard well are aware that his perceptions of animation, and his love for the field, were formed at a young age, when he saw Snow White and Pinocchio. This childlike sense of wonder has never left him, and his reverence for quality animation is what drives his book's energetic, positive tone. I loved Shamus Culhane's book, Talking Animals and Other People, but felt that its playfully sarcastic approach was the result of many frustrating battles fought over the years. It's the Mommie Dearest of animation.

Howard has seen his share of bumps in the road as well, but his book conveys an optimism and enthusiasm for his craft that's remarkable for someone who has been involved in animation for over fifty years. The book is a record of the changes he's seen in that time, a reflection on what these changes have meant- to him, and the industry- and a revealing look at the intricate technical details that go into making an animated film.

One of the most significant transitions in the industry is the recent trend away from traditional, hand drawn films towards computer graphics and hi-tech 3-D imagery. I love these effects, but when I think of the word "animation", I don't think of these things. I think of moving characters around, and acting out a drama with emotion, suspense and humor. Howard obviously does too. In this light, I think his book comes at an important time. There are many skilled technicians out there who are quite good at manipulating text and layers of graphics, but I don't consider these people animators in the classical sense of the word. Many people are entering the industry without a balanced knowledge of how to develop a character, build an emotion, or construct a gag or a punchline. If Howard's book is saying anything about animation, it's saying that the ability to draw well- while very important- is only a part of the job. A large portion of his book is dedicated to the communication skills necessary in creating animation: the intangible elements of style, humor, subtext, and symbolic resonance that elevate a project from a technical exercise to a meaningful viewing experience.

Computers have made animation technology and software affordable and widespread, but few console artists really have a comprehensive understanding of what goes into creating characters that have appeal and conviction. It's the reason there are so many technically polished but cold films floating around.

Howard's book explains these processes in simple, direct, and accessible terms. His writing style is informal and conversational, like his teaching style.

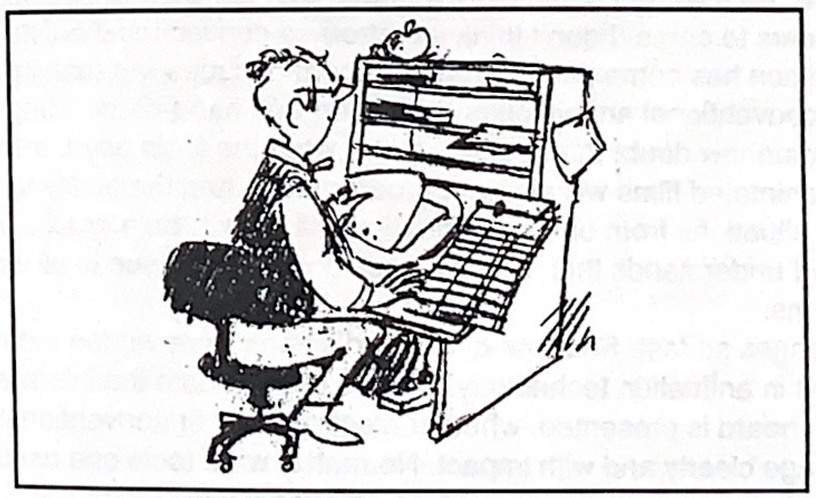
Sometimes the minutia of animation can seem very dry and cumbersome. Howard goes into many specifics, but never at the expense of the reader's attention span. The book is divided into several dense chapters, but it can be read in installments, which is proper, since it is- primarily- an instructional tool.

This function is the core of the book's success. This is not a coffee table book on the history of animation. There's a chapter in there in which Howard gives his unique perspective on this, but he (and we) know others have covered this ground. Once he's established the form and its background, Howard leaves the history behind and spends the rest of his book, basically, teaching his class through its pages.

This is a book that would be useful for both the experienced and the novice animator. Howard has attempted (and succeeded, I think) in writing a book that's filled with technical specs, but that won't frighten off someone new to the field. His explanations of field guides, exposure sheets, and the editing process are concise and elegant.

But what I found the most absorbing was Howard's take on creating believable characters and situations, using the classic elements of drama and humor. Many people can draw well; so few can involve an audience in the story they're telling. Howard's book addresses the art behind the art, the style and substance of specifically animated filmmaking, in a way that makes even the familiar ground he treads feel fresh. The book is characterized by his innate good taste, and his classy approach to the art form. To give instruction, Howard doesn't simply reference other animated films, he cites everything from Aesop's fables, Shakespearean drama, the choreography of Agnes DeMille, and the physical comedy of Charlie Chaplin. No animator can afford to ignore these influences, nor should they. Howard is respectful and deferential towards the Disney classics, but his book doesn't hold these polished films up as the only standard for excellence. He addresses many different techniques, including clay and stop motion, sand, glass painting, and, yes, computer animation.

However, the book speaks most eloquently to those people who want to make films on their own. It's a guide for how to start with nothing and come up with something. Many animators get overwhelmed when faced with the prospect of creating something so immense and daunting as an animated film. "Everyone wants to start out making



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Pinocchio", he once told me, when I was in school. "Start with something small, and enjoy it." It was good advice then, and it's good advice now. Howard's book speaks to independent animators who really want to know if they should shoot in Super-8, 16mm, or videotape. He answers questions about field guides and graduated pans. He talks about the evolution of a character like Bugs Bunny, and the importance of giving a central character a flaw, or an obstacle, in order to drive their personality and the story. And he illustrates all of these points with clear, simple drawings that make even the most complex issues seem manageable. Nearly all of the illustrations in the book are Howard's own work, and it's a staggering accomplishment. We've seen other books on animation which are lavishly illustrated with movie stills and glossy color photos. Howard's book reads like sketches on a teacher's blackboard, and this reliance on his own artwork gives the book a distinctive and singular style.

It's like going to school with Howard all over again, only without the commute.

Here, I believe, is the book's real value: it's a full, comprehensive course in animation for those of us who thought we knew it already, or for those of us who never quite got how to read an exposure sheet when we "learned it" the first time. The book is so packed with helpful hints that it would be impossible to list them all, but some that stood out for me were the statistics on wing flaps per second (pelican, stork, owl, sparrow, and hummingbird), the best place to start when animating a walk cycle, and when (and why) not to render a storyboard in full color. Like I said, it 's the whole story.

These useful instructional details make the book worth taking a second, third and fourth look at, but what I found the most engaging was its cheerful and affectionate tone. This is clearly a book written by someone who loves, loves, loves, what he does, and wants to share it with others. That quality is rare, in a teacher and a writer. It gives the book a gentle, inviting tone that's an accurate reflection of Howard's personality.

For those of us lucky enough to know Howard, there are always those great lunches, where we can sit for hours and get all this stuff live, from the horse's mouth, as it were. But for everyone else, Animation, the Whole Story, is the next best thing. Howard has put himself into the book, and reading it is something very much like having access to him in person. You not only learn what animation requires from an artist (and gives back) but you come away knowing quite a lot about the book's author: his tastes, sense of humor, likes and dislikes, and favorite films. That Beckerman manages this feat without ever once dishing the dirt on those he's worked with over the years is remarkable. (Sorry, all you fans of intrigue and inter-studio drama, you'll have to wait for Howard's second book for all that, if he ever writes it.)

I admire Howard for taking the high road, instead of writing a tell-all, which he certainly could have done. He's written something valuable that will serve as a useful tool for animators for years to come. I don't think it matters to conventional artists that computer animation has come into the fore in recent decades. So many people are predicting that conventional animation is dead, and that hand-drawn films will be phased out. I somehow doubt that, but no matter what the tools used, the need for a strong story in animated films will always be paramount, and the ability to design characters and situations from one's imagination will always be a crucial part of the industry. Howard understands that, and his book covers this issue in all its complexity and contradictions.

Technology changes so fast. Sections of Howard's book were written before the more recent advances in animation technology, but this doesn't date the information inside. However a storyboard is presented, whether electronically or conventionally, it must convey a message clearly and with impact. No matter what tools one uses to render a character, it must move the audience in some emotional way.

Can any one book really cover the enormous scope of the animation industry? Is it possible for one writer to speak to the thousands of issues and problems that animators face, both artistically and financially, during their career? I can't answer that, but I will say that no one I know is more qualified to attempt this intimidating task, and Howard has written a thorough, insightful, and most of all entertaining book that will possibly bring more people into the field. Animation, the Whole Story is a valuable course book, but more than that, it serves as a friendly invitation to the industry itself. "Welcome into the exciting world of animation," Howard is saying. "You're going to love this." I did.

The **MTV Networks Internship Program** allows college students the ability to work in an innovative, progressive, fast paced and professional environment. Students are exposed to all levels of MTV Networks. This has proven to be an invaluable experience to individuals interested in pursuing careers in the entertainment industry. An internship is a partnership. The students are looking to develop the necessary skills for careers within MTV Networks, and we are committed to providing them with the tools to achieve this goal.

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Suzanne Lumerman
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suzanne.lumerman@mtvn.com

Adventures in Webtoondom by Xeth Feinberg

One Year Later
Or, The Odd Case Of "Queer Duck"

Last February, when I wrote an article for this newsletter detailing my exploits as an independent Flash animator, the internet bubble had already burst like an infected boil and the virtual dust was settling upon the remains of countless web-based entertainment schemes and mostly forgettable webtoons.

With as much zen-like calm as I could muster, I watched hard-won production deals morph into so many "recipient unknown" emails as companies I'd been cranking out cartoons like "Hard-Drinkin Lincoln," "Queer Duck" and "Bulbo" for went belly up or down-scaled into near invisibility. Nobody wanted to fund original internet animation once somebody somewhere finally pointed out that there was no working business model. It was just like the documentary "Startup.com" only with cartoons. Fortunately, I did have a working business model. Unfortunately, it was producing and selling animation to the other guys.

With a heavy heart and a pretty good party, I bailed out of the nifty Mishmash Media loft space on 28th Street I'd confidently rented just nine months before. (Note to people inexperienced with Manhattan commercial landlords: Don't try this at home.) I consoled myself with the knowledge that many smarter, more sophisticated people had over-extended themselves far worse.

I spent the summer getting back to basics: Thinking about some cartoon ideas, driving across the country, and goofing off. After two years of meeting crazy deadlines, it was a welcome, if unsettling, break.

Visiting Los Angeles, I parlayed my vast fame into lunch with the founders of Icebox.com (the formerly leading animation website that fueled my own rise and fall), snuck into a party where Matt Groening said he was a big fan of my Bulbo series, and got a free T-shirt at the Cartoon Network.

During all this time, there was one blip of potential on the horizon: What would happen with "Queer Duck?"

In the fall of 2000 I designed, directed and animated five episodes of "Queer Duck" for Icebox.com. Written and created by Mike Reiss, who won Emmy's for his work on "The Simpsons" and "The Critic," "Queer Duck" follows the off-kilter adventures of a gay waterfowl and became Icebox's most popular show. It was also the only one that anybody else wanted to invest in. When Icebox went bankrupt in February, 2001 (something I learned by reading a blurb in the New York Times) there were still rumors of funding more Queer Ducks. Good news, especially since I was still owed money for three of the original episodes.

The next eight months involved endless phone calls trying to keep tabs on all the bankruptcy mess. By mid-September, when acrid skyscraper smoke billowed through my Brooklyn apartment window, Queer Duck seemed doomed, not to mention incredibly trivial. Imagine my surprise when I suddenly started getting calls from a lawyer at Showtime Networks. Showtime had been struggling to wrestle free the rights to Queer Duck, feeling it would be a perfect compliment to their hit cable show "Queer As Folk," and had finally succeeded.

In only three and a half more months of expensive agony, the lawyers worked out a simple 30-plus page agreement that let me get back involved in the project. Soon I was happily storyboarding 15 inspired new Mike Reiss scripts, this time for a company that had been in business for more than eight months.

Working out of Brooklyn, and taking full advantage of Flash's flexibility and the ability to work in a 'virtual office' by email and computer, I'm now churning out the new Queer Ducks on another manic schedule. Veteran flash animator Chris Siemasko and musical producer Sam Elwitt round out the Mishmash Media team, while vocals (featuring Jim J. Bullock, Billy "Ren and Stimpy" West, Tress MacNeil, Estelle "George Costanza's Mother" Harris and others) are recorded in Los Angeles, overseen by Mike Reiss and coordinated by Joel Kuwahara.

Animation production started in early December and on January 23 SHO.COM unveiled an impressive new website with the original Icebox era episodes. Each week one of the new three minute cartoons is posted, and every Tuesday night "Queer Duck" is also shown on TV right after the new season of "Queer As Folk." (Demonstrating again the flexibility of that swell little Macromedia Flash application.)

No one will confuse the animation in "Queer Duck" with "Fantasia" (as if that's what we were after), but it does a good job of bringing the flamboyant characters and fabulous story to life with zest and personal style, in record time -- if I do say so myself. (Nudge nudge to anybody reading this at a network that's using more of this new technology.) Even while animation in general is in a sad slump, like a truly flaming phoenix, Queer Duck has miraculously risen from the internet junk heap to find a new and bigger audience.

See for yourself by following the links at mishmashmedia.com.

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2 page treatment based on mock archetype – written or storyboarded

For application forms and archetype details, see our website:

A Short History of Animators, Ink.

By Alisa Harris

Animators, Ink. is an organization that creates a network where professionals, students, independents, freelancers, and amateurs can communicate and share information regarding experience and work related to animation. We encourage cooperation and assistance between artists. Anyone who is interested in animation, be it the creative process or the viewing enjoyment is welcome to our events and activities. Animators, Ink. is a non-profit organization. We do not charge members for our services. Any vendor of animation products, services, software, or related media is welcome to advertise through our website or newsletter for a donation. Animators, Ink. can also offer services in the production of Public Service announcements in cooperation with other organizations. Any commissions made through this venue can help us maintain our community.

The group grew from the idea of students helping one another with their projects and taking on issues in the School of Visual Arts Animation department, which concerned students in early 2001. Jose Maldonado and Alisa Harris were the main coordinators of the group and continue to organize many of the activities along with the other members. Animators, Ink. has grown to considerable size in a short while. Membership now includes animators from Pratt, RISDI, Nickelodeon, Noodle Soup, B3 Pictures, Women in Animation, Blue Sky, Cartoon Pizza, Flicker Lab, Pitch, Inc., and more.

Animators, Ink. completed its first cooperative film "New York Inkpression" using the talents of 19 artists over the course of two days during October 2001. Directed by Christi Bertelsen the animation was shot and compiled at SVA. The event was hosted by Gina Bari and the Up All Night Club, an SVA club started for night-owl students who prefer to do their artwork at ungodly hours. The two-minute piece was screened at the ASIFA East open screening on October 23. It was also shown to Howard Beckerman's History of Animation class at SVA.

Animators, Ink. is currently in the works on its website http://www.animatorsink.com which will supply news updates and information on our upcoming events as well as a message board to post animation related topics for discussion. Through our website, people will also be able to get exposure for their film or artwork.

The group is also working with a New York production house helping them to put together a 5 minute short to be shown at festivals, an experience invaluable to students and artists who haven't had the chance to work with a team of animators.

For more information about Animators, Ink. E-mail Inkquire@AnimatorsInk.com